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Former CIA Officer Stockwell Blasts Agency in UNH Speech

By CAROL LIGHT

Union Leader Correspondent

DURHAM — Former Central Intelligence Agency case officer John Stockwell told a gathering of about 100 at the University of New Hampshire last night that "the CIA is a mistake...this country would be stronger and the world would be safer if we had never created a CIA."

Stockwell served for 13 years with the CIA stationed in Africa and Vietnam, and is the highest ranking case officer to criticize CIA tactics, which he outlines in his book, "In Search of Enemies."

Stockwell told his audience about CIA operations in Africa, which forced him to pressure local contacts into searching out possible subversion in government. On one occasion, Stockwell said he feels he may have indirectly helped to engineer a proposal to overthrow a government by pressuring his contacts for more information.

Stockwell also criticized CIA methods of recruiting agents and contacts in foreign countries.

"You never used the word 'spy'," he said. "When talking to a recruit, you didn't talk in terms of inducing them to commit treason against their own government."

"You build friendships, consciously, manipulatively...you mold your personality to attract the contacts you want and people accept the recruitment in part because you've fulfilled that need to have a second private life."

Stockwell joined the CIA in 1964 after a number of years with the Marine Corps. He said that at the time "it seemed to be the most worthwhile thing I could do with my life."

He criticized CIA operations in Vietnam, explaining that when CIA activities there were completed, he was forced to leave 52 Vietnamese contacts to face execution. Three months after the Vietnamese operations were completed, Stockwell was appointed as Angola Task Force Commander.

"At that point, I made a deal with the devil...I found it irresistible," Stockwell said of his appointment. "I kept hoping that all the pieces would make sense, that I would end up knowing that my government was essentially right in what it was doing. But the pieces never fit together."

Stockwell also described "special access agents" — women recruited by CIA agents to spy on foreign ambassadors by seducing them.

He also told the audience that when he joined the organization, there were 400 journalists across the country cooperating with the CIA to introduce its propaganda into the media. At the same time, 5,000 university professors were looking for students who might be able to offer the CIA information on what the government viewed as subversive activities or to act as agents on campus.

Stockwell said the CIA was created as "a peacetime cloak and dagger outfit to assure that there would never be another Pearl Harbor."

"It was somewhere you could go to get dirty things done in times of dire crisis."